

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q There are hundreds of Java games available for normal mobile phones, but what about my Windows Mobile smartphone?

A There are plenty of games available for Windows Mobile, usually for a modest fee. Astraware (www.astraware.com) has a wide selection of puzzle games such as the fantastic Zuma, and you can download the classic epic space shooter Darxide EMP from www.frontier.co.uk.

However, our favourite way to play games on touch-screen Windows Mobile phones is to use the ScummVM emulator to play classic point-and-click adventures. The program lets you play engrossing and beautiful classics such as Beneath a Steel Sky, Lure of the Temptress and Broken Sword, complete with speech, music and sound effects. The program is free, and the above games are all free to download from www.scummvm.org.

Chris Finnamore

Labs Editor

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HTC Touch Cruise

★★★★

£410 inc VAT SIM-free, £177 inc VAT on £27.50-per-month contract
From www.expansys.com

The Touch Cruise is HTC's latest Windows Mobile smartphone to use the TouchFlo interface, which we saw previously on the Touch and Touch Dual. It's a higher-specification smartphone than its predecessors, with extras such as a 3-megapixel camera and a built-in GPS receiver.

The Touch Cruise is a stylish phone, with a smart silver front and textured rubber back. The standard Windows Mobile directional keypad has been replaced with a scroll wheel, making it easy to navigate through menu options, lists of contacts and webpages.

The TouchFlo interface is a front end for Windows Mobile rather than a complete replacement. From the home screen, sliding your finger up from the bottom of the screen launches the TouchFlo menu. You can then drag your finger across the screen to flip between contacts, main applications such as email and messaging and multimedia applications such as music, photos and videos. The interface has large buttons, so you can make calls and launch the most common applications without the stylus. You can also scroll around the screen with your finger, as with the iPhone, but the scrolling is jerky and inaccurate.

The main problem with TouchFlo is that it launches standard Windows Mobile applications, which have tiny icons and are impossible to use with your finger. Unlike SPB's Mobile Shell (reviewed opposite) it isn't possible to customise the interface to show the applications you want.



The Touch Cruise has the usual set of Windows Mobile programs. The email application can connect to POP3 and IMAP email servers as well as Microsoft Exchange. As the Cruise has no physical keypad, you have to use an onscreen keyboard. In addition to the tiny Windows Mobile keyboard, there's a 20-key keyboard with two letters per key and a nine-key phone-style keypad for predictive text. Both of these work well enough but are rather sluggish. Windows Mobile's keyboard was the best, but the Touch Dual's physical keypad is easier to use than all of them.

With 3G and HSDPA wireless data and 802.11g wireless networking, the Touch Cruise lets you connect to the internet from almost anywhere. It comes with the Opera web browser, which is faster and better at formatting pages to fit the screen than Pocket Internet Explorer. There's also a trial version of TomTom's Navigator, which lets you download a map of one city for free. We got reasonable photos in daylight from the built-in camera, but there's no LED or flash for photos in dim light.

HTC's Touch Cruise is a powerful Windows Mobile smartphone, but it's expensive even with a mobile phone contract. What's more, the lack of a physical keypad makes text entry considerably more tricky than it is with other models.

Unless you really need built-in GPS, you're better off with the Touch Dual or Palm's non-touch-screen 500v (see 'Also consider...', below).

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Comprehensive specification
- ✗ No physical keypad
- ✗ Expensive

SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, tri-band 3G, GPRS, EDGE, HSDPA, 2.8in 240x320 resolution LCD, 3.0-megapixel camera, 110MB storage, USB2, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, 7 hours' talktime, 17 days' standby, 110x58x16mm, 130g
PART CODE HTC P3650
DETAILS www.htc.com

Also consider...

TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£200 inc VAT
From www.play.com

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

TomTom's Go 720 is an excellent navigator with full maps of Western Europe, a large screen and clear voice prompts. Its most impressive aspect is the Map Share feature, which lets you correct map errors on the device. You can even upload these changes to TomTom's servers for other TomTom owners to download. It also has Bluetooth, an FM transmitter and voice recognition, all of which make it the best satnav available.



STANDALONE SATNAV 4.3in 480x272 resolution LCD, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g PART CODE 1M00.760 DETAILS www.tomtom.com
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

APPLE iPhone

★★★★★

£269 on £35-per-month contract
From <http://store.apple.com/Apple/WebObjects/ukstore>

Even after all the hype, the iPhone doesn't disappoint. It's a hugely capable smartphone with a superbly designed interface, powerful messaging capabilities and the best smartphone web browser available. It's not perfect – the recessed headphone socket means you can't use your own headphones without an ugly adaptor, and the internet browser is hobbled by the lack of 3G. It will also cost you £900 over the 18-month contract. However, it's still the best smartphone we've seen.



SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, GPRS, EDGE, 3½in 320x480-resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 8GB storage, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, eight hours' talktime, 10 days' standby, 135g PART CODE MB213B/A DETAILS www.apple.com/uk
FULL REVIEW Mar 2008

SPB

Mobile Shell 2.0

★★★★★

\$30 (approximately £15)

From www.spbsoftwarehouse.comCOMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

The HTC Touch Cruise's TouchFlo interface attempts, with some success, to make Windows Mobile easier to use (see opposite). Mobile Shell is even easier to use and can be installed on any touch-screen Windows Mobile 5 or 6 smartphone. It's designed as an add-on to Windows Mobile's Today screen rather than a replacement. Once installed, you have to launch it from the Start menu, but after that you can set Mobile Shell to run every time you bring the phone out of standby.

Mobile Shell consists of a Today screen, an applications screen and a contacts screen, all of which have icons large enough to tap with your finger. You flick between them by sliding your finger across the screen. The Home screen shows you the time and calendar appointments and has short cuts to messages and missed calls. The Contacts window has buttons for each of your favourite contacts, and you can assign a photo to each one. Another button brings up the full contacts list, complete with an onscreen numeric keypad. To find a contact, you just need to type the name you're looking for as if you were typing predictive text, and it will narrow down the contacts list accordingly. It works beautifully, and makes it faster and easier to find the number you need than the standard Windows Mobile contacts manager.

Mobile Shell's best feature is its applications screen. It has a number of categories, including Organiser, Internet, Multimedia and Tools. Clicking on each brings up a subset of programs and menus. This keeps the number in each category manageable and helps you to find the function you



▲ SPB's Mobile Shell replaces the clunky Windows Mobile interface with something slick and fun to use

want. Again, the icons are all large enough to tap with your finger and the menus work incredibly quickly and smoothly. Compared to Mobile Shell, the normal Windows Mobile Start menu seems fiddly and sluggish, and it's a joy to explore your phone's functions. You can fully customise your Today screen, as well what appears in each category on the Applications screen. It's also easy to add new installed applications to the Mobile Shell, and there are several colour schemes and animations to choose from.

The only problem with Mobile Shell is that when you exit a Windows Mobile application you are taken back to the Windows Mobile Today screen, rather than the Mobile Shell Today screen.

We would like to see an option to make the Mobile Shell Today screen the default. Still, you can access its menus from any application by dragging your finger down from the Start bar.

Mobile Shell is far better than TouchFlo, and is a vital application for any Windows Mobile smartphone owner.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ A joy to use
- ✓ Highly customisable
- ✓ Good value

SMARTPHONE SOFTWARE
Requires touchscreen Windows Mobile 5 or 6 smartphone, 3.3MB storage space
DETAILS www.spbsoftwarehouse.com

CHOOSING A...
Smartphone

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

STYLE: Handset

BANDS: GSM 900/1,800/1,900

SCREEN: 240x320; 65,536 colours

INPUT: Keypad

CAMERA: 1.3 megapixel

BLUETOOTH: Yes

DATA CALLS: GPRS

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm OS, Windows Mobile or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 6.0 has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button, and is found on both handset- and PDA-style smartphones.

The only Palm OS smartphones available are Palm's Treo 680 and Centro. There are four types of Symbian operating systems: series 60, 80, 90 and UIQ. Series 60, 80 and 90 are found on Nokia smartphones, while Sony Ericsson uses UIQ for its P900 smartphone series. Windows Mobile 6.0, Palm OS and Symbian all support third-party applications, and there is a vast amount of both freeware and commercial software available.

Symbian is often heavily customised by the phone's manufacturer and so may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Windows Mobile and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with three megapixels being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as video messages, this shouldn't be a problem for most people.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Data is usually billed per megabyte downloaded, but if you sign up for a data bundle when buying your smartphone it will work out cheaper.

ARCHOS
405

★★★★★

£99 inc VAT

From www.kikatek.com

Archos's budget portable media player replaces the 404.

Unlike the 404, it has 2GB of flash storage instead of a 30GB hard disk, but it can take up to 16GB of extra storage in its SDHC card slot. The player is easy to use, and video looks good on the bright and clear screen. It's good value, and will become better value as SDHC cards drop in price.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2GB storage, SDHC card slot, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, WAV, AAC with optional plug-in, five hours' video playback, 16 hours' audio playback, USB2, 100x13x78mm, 146g PART CODE 105914EU V2 DETAILS www.archos.com FULL REVIEW Jan 2008

PALM
Treo 500v

★★★★★

Free on £20-per-month contract

From www.vodafone.co.ukCOMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Palm's Treo 500v is a great-looking Windows Mobile phone with a QWERTY keyboard. Palm has heavily customised the operating system, so it's far simpler to use than most Windows Mobile phones. The keyboard is easy to use, and the Google Maps and Messenger applications are particularly useful. It's also free on a cheap mobile contract, which makes it great value.



SMARTPHONE Tri-band, 3G, GPRS, 2½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 150MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, 4½ hours' talk time, 10 days' standby, 120g PART CODE 1060IE-VFN DETAILS www.palm.com REVIEW Dec 2007